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KAMPALA FOR REFUGEE COORDINATOR RSCHIEBEL,  
AF/E FOR BYODER, PRM/AFR

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SUBJECT: PONTOONS, PIER AND PROMOTED RETURNS: REFUGEE  
UPDATE FROM TANZANIA

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On March 31, UNHCR Representative, Chrysantus Ache, updated donor representatives on refugee issues in Tanzania. Returns to Burundi have come to a virtual halt and are more than offset by new Burundian arrivals at waystations, mostly due to food insecurity. UNHCR will transition from facilitated return to Burundi to promoted return in September. Congolese continue to return but that process is dependent on the construction of a pier in Kigoma. Since two months minimum are needed to build the pier, any delay in securing funding and the use or purchase of two pontoons may result in interruptions to the Congolese repatriation. End summary.

Pontoons vital to pier construction, repatriation

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¶2. (U) Ache said the building of a pier at Kigoma was moving forward and that a funding request is forthcoming. Officials of the Tanzanian Port Authority (TPA) provided the design and cost estimate for the pier on March 30. Construction will be by the TPA and will take approximately two months. The key to the pier construction is the availability of two pontoons. Of the USD 308,000 cost estimate, USD 250,000 is for the purchase of two pontoons (at USD 125,000 each) which are necessary for the pier construction. The current loan of pontoons from the Belgian government was extended to April 15 and UNHCR has requested a further extension to May 31. However, the pontoons have been promised to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and will become property of the Government of the DRC upon removal from Kigoma. Therefore, the governments of Belgium and the DRC are currently discussing the issue of the pontoons' loan and how long they can be used in Kigoma. The European Union Humanitarian Aid Office Representative, Yves Horent, commented that it seems "unreal" that the DRC refugee repatriation, which has a budget of USD 62 million, could come to a halt for want of USD 58,000.

¶3. (U) Ache pointed out that a pier in Kigoma would be a boost for economic development of the Great Lakes region as there is no pier in Kigoma at present. Conversely, the lack of a pier and the corresponding halt of facilitated repatriation, combined with elections in the DRC this summer, could push the refugees to try to return on their own in small, unsafe boats.

#### Waystations crowded

14. (U) Waystations continue to be overcrowded as 5,694 Burundians arrived at Kibondo District from March 1 to 28 and another 121 new arrivals were received in other districts. The Burundian government plans to launch the return of Burundians from the waystations to Burundi on April 4. However, some Burundians at the waystations (UNHCR estimates the number to be in the hundreds) do need protection and, as those persons are identified, UNHCR is moving them to transit centers in refugee camps. Burundians at waystations commonly move back and forth across the border, with some arriving at waystations with bags to carry back into Burundi the food they receive in Tanzania. Children commonly attend school in Burundi, then return to the waystations in Tanzania for the night. Ache said the UNHCR was impressing upon the Burundian government that food is to be distributed to those who need it and the best option is for Burundians to return to Burundi and receive food there.

#### Promoted return

15. (U) At the ninth Tripartite meeting on March 21, the Government of Burundi (GOB), the Government of Tanzania (GOT) and UNHCR agreed to transition from facilitating return to promoting return. The launch is scheduled for June 20 (World Refugee Day) with the promotion to start in September 2006. It is hoped this time frame will allow the four areas of Burundi that are in Phase IV of the UN plan, and therefore ineligible for promoted return, to be out of Phase IV by the time promoted return begins. The agreement to transition to promoted return includes the GOB's agreement to provide land to those returning.

#### Returnee numbers

16. (U) In March, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 688 Burundian refugees, the lowest number since April 2002, and 2,610 Congolese refugees. The food shortage in Burundi is the main cause of the low interest in repatriation to Burundi. At month's end, refugee camps in Tanzania continued to be home to 339,200 refugees: 193,200 Burundians, 141,000 Congolese, 2,700 Somalis and 2,300 of various nationalities.  
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